



Curatorial > PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY.  
RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN  
UNDERGROUND

With this section, RWM continues a line of programmes devoted to exploring the complex map of sound art from different points of view organised in curatorial series.

PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND presents a comprehensive but very personal map of sound art and experimental pop in Eastern Europe. This six-part series is a playful mix of documentary and game-like commissioned works that explore the artistic, political, economic and psychological survival tactics used in the region. This rather unusual and highly imaginative survey is built up with the help of our "umbrella agents", key figures in each region being explored, who introduce us to their artistic radius and network of friends, focusing on their ways of constructing and deconstructing reality. They become our voice and our ears, and help us to create a context of like-minded artists that is regional and at the same time more international.

Curated by Felix Kubin.

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Felix Kubin (b. 1969) lives and works against gravitation. His activities span futurist pop, electroacoustic and chamber orchestra music, radio plays, performance projects and workshops. In 1998 he founded his own record label Gagarin Records. Over the last two decades, he has released numerous albums and played at many international electronic contemporary music festivals. Along with composing and performing, Kubin's main interest is radio art. He has written and produced several feature-length radio plays for German National broadcasters (WDR, BR, Deutschlandradio) and performed live shows for London's Resonance FM and Vienna's ORF Kunstradio. His plays are often based on a mix of documentary, fiction and sound art.

# PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND

## #2

### Czech Republic and Slovakia

A decade after the end of the communist regime, Czech and Slovakian underground musicians began channeling the national legacy of progressive dissident rock to virgin soil. Their new amalgams consist of mechanical sound art, free improvisation, 8-bit folklore and industrial club culture.

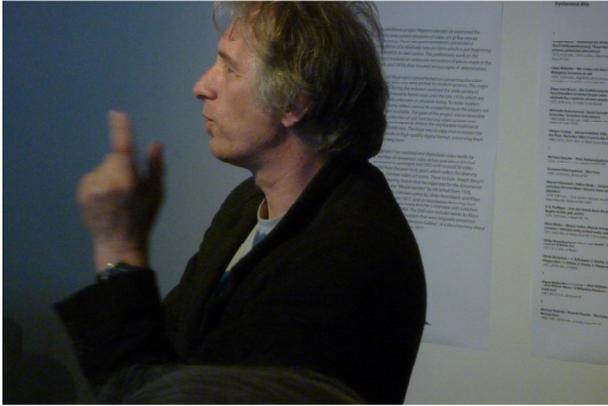
#### 01. Summary

Part two of PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY. RUMOURS FROM THE EASTERN UNDERGROUND explores the music scenes of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Our local umbrella agents were Miloš Vojtechovský and Zuzana 'Friday' Příkrylová. Miloš is part of an older generation that witnessed the transitory period from the communist era to the Velvet Revolution in 1989. He is currently one of the main curators at the prolific cultural center Školská 28 in Prague. Zuzana, a journalist and media theorist from Brno, was born in 1989. For PARASOL ELEKTRONICZNY she focused on the young scene that has formed around folk-inspired club noise pop in Brno and Bratislava.

While Prague's current underground consists of a fragmented series of circles and sub-genres that tend to keep within their own boundaries, the Moravian scene in Brno is more compact and strongly influenced by the legacy of the European *Rock In Opposition* movement\*. The four artists interviewed by Miloš Vojtechovský and Petr Vrba – Peter Graham (aka Jaroslav Štastný), Ivan Palacký, Tomáš Procházka (aka Federsel) and Petr Ferenc – grew up in these two musical epicentres of the Czech Republic. They all mention progressive rock as an early influence but also point out the importance of improvisation and Cagean aleatorics in their music, which is an approach that doesn't yet have a long tradition in their home country. According to Peter Graham, who graduated from the Janáček Academy of Music in Brno, forward-thinking academic music was so zealously suppressed by the communist regime that the alternative rock scene – represented mainly by a dark visionary style of the Czech underground school of rock groups as Plastic People of the Universe, or DG 307 – became a haven for all younger generations of musical dissidents.

'The 1970s and 1980s were the decades of the rigid Neo-Stalinist regime installed by Soviet tanks in 1968 following Czechoslovakia's brief experiment in cultural and political liberalisation. It was an epoch that brought centralist control and conformism to the Czech arts. For long years, official contemporary music concerts were grey and boring affairs. Conservatism also ruled the music schools where composition was taught. (...) [However, some composers] tended to see themselves as the successors of the Czech avant-garde of the 1960s, i.e. of groups of composers who at the time were ostracised and driven underground into a position of musical dissent.' (Miroslav Pudlák, 'Czech composers in the post-modern era', *Chamber music – Czech Music CD Series 1*, 2007)

When the situation of artists relaxed in 1989, the younger generation was able to draw on a rich underground culture that had continued to exist during the communist regime.



[Miloš Vojtechovský. Foto: MV, Martin Blažíček]

From the sound aesthetics of surreal Czechoslovakian films to the expressionist soundtracks by Zdeněk Liška (represented in this feature by short jingles and film excerpts) and the late experiments of Palacký/Graham and Petr Ferenc' Birds Build Nests Underground (BBNU), many of the works share a fascination with mechanics. These take the form of different organisms, such as Ivan Palacký's amplified knitting machine, Jan Švankmajer's human food apparatus in the macabre film trilogy *Jídlo*, and BBNU's improvised cinema of sound. Then there is Tomáš Procházka, a musician from Prague who is involved in the DIY multidisciplinary group Handa Gote and the neo-Krautrock band B4 and also works as a puppeteer, following the famous tradition of Czech puppet theatre with its taste for the demonic and grotesque. The leitmotif connecting all of these artists is the incantation of imaginary machines, sound alchemy and catoptrics.

As Zuzana Přikrylová's research shows, the younger generation is more at home in the digital realm of playful, edgy beats and cut-ups and has strong ties to club culture. Bands like Hugo & Zoe from Brno and Kyl The Sistem from Bratislava have created something of a folk exploitation craze, where improvisation is more evident in the social context than in the music. During the interviews, their playful and dynamic way of talking effortlessly shifts from statements to songs, dramatic quotations and beatbox noises.

Michal Lichý of Urban Sounds Collective sees his roots in industrial culture, modern architecture and noisy club music. Like Kyl The Sistem, Lichý is based in Slovakia's capital, Bratislava, where the scene is less fragmented than its equivalent in Prague. 'We help each other,' he says, pointing out how important it is that the collective can organize events without external financial support. 'Everyone who comes to play in Slovakia will find that the audience is very open-minded and warm-hearted whereas the political culture is corrupt and mainly focused on profit.' In their typical sarcastic madcap style, Kyl the Sistem expresses this in a simple phrase: 'The hearts are empty, we are nihilistic but still full of love!'

**Felix Kubin, 2011.05.07**

\*RIO was founded by the British Prog Rock band Henry Cow in the late 1970s. The festival has continued to this day. See also [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock\\_in\\_Opposition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_in_Opposition)

## 02. Umbrella agents in Czech Republic and Slovakia

**Miloš Vojtechovský** studied Aesthetics and Art History at the Charles University in Prague. He is a musician, journalist, curator at the Školská 28 arts space and lecturer at the Department of Audiovisual Studies at the Film and Television Faculty of The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. His work usually gravitates around the concepts of radio art, locative media and participatory activities.

**Zuzana 'Friday' Přikrylová** studies Theory of Interactive Media at the Masaryk University in Brno. She is a musician and music journalist working for various Czech journals, magazines and radio stations. Přikrylová was born in Prague but has been heavily involved in the Brno music scene for years, promoting experimental and extreme music events, as well as some alternative club nights.

## 03. Featured artists (in order of appearance)

Ivan Palacký and Peter Graham (Jaroslav Štastný) – Brno (CZ)  
 Federsel (Tomáš Procházka) – Prague (CZ)  
 Birds Build Nests Underground (Petr Ferenc, Michal Brunclik and Martin Ježek) – Prague (CZ)  
 Hugo & Zoe (Johana Merta, Ondřej Merta and David Merta) – Brno (CZ)  
 Kyl the Sistem (Mungular Bubu and BOOM Fonda Spacey) – Bratislava (SK)  
 Urban Failure (Michal Lichý) – Bratislava (SK)



[Zuzana Prikrylová ]

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#### 04. Commissions: Slovakia's new national anthem

**Slovakia's new national anthem** has been composed by Michal Lichý (Urban Failure). 'It's the anthem of NOW because it expresses how I fear reality will present itself. And because it captures the mood of the moment when I created it'.

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#### 05. Credits

Curated by Felix Kubin. Editing and final production: Felix Kubin. Interviews: Miloš Vojtechovsky, Petr Vrba and Zuzana 'Friday' Prikrylová . Announcement voice: Patrycia Ziolkowska. Voiceover of Zuzana Prikrylová : Pilar Cruz. Umbrella agents in Czech Republic and Slovakia: Miloš Vojtechovský and Zuzana Prikrylová. The new anthem of Slovakia: Urban Failure. Audio diary: Kyl the Sistem.

Additional music by:  
Zdeněk Liška (excerpts from the film scores *Et Cetera* and *IKARIE XB-1*).  
Zdenek Sikola (excerpts from the film score *The Last Trick*).

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#### 06. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Miloš, Zuzana, Pilar and all the participating artists.

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#### 07. Copyright note

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